

RETAIL PRICES - DECEMBER QUARTER, 1956.

Index numbers of retail prices for the December quarter of 1956 (with the weighted average of the six capital cities in 1923-1927 as base of 1,000) were as shown below.

"C" Series Retail Price Index Numbers and Percentage Increases<sup>a</sup>,  
December Quarter, 1956.

City.	Aggregate All Groups.			All Groups, excluding Price Movements in Potatoes and Onions.		
	Index Number.	Increase from-		Index Number.	Increase from-	
		Dec. Qtr., 1955.	Sept. Qtr., 1956.		Dec. Qtr., 1955.	Sept. Qtr., 1956.
		%	%		%	%
Brisbane ..	2335	5.0	-1.5	2305	3.6	0.8
Toowoomba ..	2382	5.3	-0.9	2348	3.8	1.2
Rockhampton	2370	4.7	-0.9	2341	3.6	0.9
Townsville	2444	4.0	-1.4	2421	3.1	0.6
Bundaberg ..	2317	4.6	-0.4	2279	2.8	1.3
Warwick ..	2332	4.6	-1.1	2293	3.0	0.8

a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

The All Groups Index Number for Brisbane showed a decrease of 1.5 per cent. in the December quarter of 1956. Although this was the largest decrease in any quarter since the September quarter of 1931 when prices were falling heavily during the economic depression, it does not indicate any significant break in the recent general upward trend of prices. In the September quarter of 1956, the index number had been subject to an abnormally large rise owing to supplies of potatoes and onions diminishing and thus causing abnormal price increases for these vegetables. The fall in the December quarter was a reflection of the progressive restoration of their supplies and a very rapid recession in their prices. By December potato and onion prices were back again to a more normal level, but high prices still operating in the early part of the quarter caused their downward influence on the December quarter index number to be smaller than would otherwise have been the case.

To provide an indication of the recent trend of the index in respect of items not materially affected by the seasonal factors just mentioned, an All Groups Index and a Food and Groceries Index, both excluding the effects of recent movements in the prices of potatoes and onions again have been prepared, as for the previous quarter, and are shown in addition to the usual complete index numbers on page 4 of this bulletin. The general trend of prices as shown by these amended index numbers revealed for the latest quarter a continuation of the slow upward price movement which has been proceeding during the last four years. The increase for Brisbane during the December quarter was 0.8 per cent., compared with 1.1 per cent. for the preceding quarter and an average quarterly increase of 0.6 per cent. during the four years 1953 to 1956.

Changes in sections of the index are shown in the following table.

Retail Prices, Percentage Increases<sup>a</sup>, December Quarter, 1956.

City.	Food and Groceries.			Clothing and Footwear.		Miscellaneous Items.	
	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1956.		From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1956.	From Year Ended June, 1939.	From Sept. Quarter, 1956.
	A	A	B				
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Brisbane ..	216.7	-5.0	0.2	285.0	1.2	132.9	1.1
Toowoomba	244.1	-3.6	1.2	287.7	1.2	130.0	1.4
Rockhampton	202.6	-3.8	0.5	282.0	2.0	140.8	0.7
Townsville	194.5	-4.5	0.1	284.0	1.4	142.6	0.7
Bundaberg	204.3	-3.3	0.5	284.1	1.7	131.7	3.2
Warwick ..	228.4	-4.2	0.1	286.7	1.0	139.7	2.8

a Minus (-) indicates decrease.

Note: A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.

Food and Groceries.

As shown in the preceding table, decreases were recorded during the quarter in food and grocery index numbers for the six Queensland cities in which data are collected, but if the price movements due to potatoes and onions are excluded small increases were recorded. In all the cities prices of potatoes and onions dropped sharply, while decreases were also recorded in prices of eggs and milk (except in Townsville where the milk price was unchanged). Increases occurred in prices of sago (except in Warwick), and in bacon and pork. As a result of price changes which affected only part of the previous quarter operating throughout the whole of December quarter, there were increases in the prices of bread in all cities, mutton in Toowoomba, and beef in Rockhampton and Bundaberg, while beef prices decreased in Townsville.

Clothing and Footwear.

The clothing and footwear group showed small increases for each of the six cities, the main increases being recorded for men's and boys' footwear, and women's and girls' summer seasonal items.

Miscellaneous.

The miscellaneous items index numbers also showed increases for each of the six cities, gas and electricity prices having increased in Bundaberg and Warwick, and electricity prices in Brisbane and Toowoomba.

Rent (4 and 5 Roomed Houses).

The rent index increased in Brisbane (1.4 per cent.), Toowoomba (1.0 per cent.), and Townsville (0.4 per cent.), but remained stationary in the other three cities.

Comparison of Costs in Queensland Cities.

The following table shows the amounts, for the various Queensland cities, required in December quarter, 1956, to purchase the quantity of goods or housing which would have cost £1 in Brisbane.

Amounts Required in Various Cities to Purchase Equivalent of £1 in Brisbane.

City.	All Groups.			Food and Groceries.			Rent (4 and 5 Rooms).			Clothing and Footwear.			Miscellaneous Items.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Brisbane ..	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Toowoomba ..	1	0	4 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	8	1	0	1 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	1 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	5
Rockhampton	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{2}$		19	11 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	1	0 $\frac{1}{4}$
Townsville	1	0	11 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	9	1	2	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	1	10
Bundaberg ..		19	10 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	3 $\frac{1}{4}$		15	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	1	0	2 $\frac{1}{4}$	1	0	8 $\frac{3}{4}$
Warwick ..		19	11 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	0	6		15	0 $\frac{1}{2}$		19	11 $\frac{3}{4}$	1	1	8 $\frac{1}{4}$

Commonwealth and State Basic Wage Rates.

The Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration suspended automatic ("cost of living") adjustments after the adjustment which operated from the beginning of the first pay-period in August, 1953. Following an application for the resumption of automatic adjustments and an increase in the basic wage, the Court increased the basic wage for males in all States by 10s. from June, 1956, but did not restore the quarterly adjustments.

In Queensland, the State Industrial Court, after the publication of the index numbers for the September and December quarters of 1953, increased the basic wage by 3s. for males and 2s. for females on each occasion. During the next six quarters, the "C" Series index number for Brisbane recorded four small upward movements and two small downward movements, and the Court made no adjustment in the basic wage until after the publication of the index number for the June quarter of 1955, when an increase of 2s. for males and 1s. 6d. for females was awarded. Similar increases followed the index number for the September quarter of 1955, but no change occurred for the December quarter of 1955. Following publication of the index numbers for the March and June quarters of 1956, the Court increased the basic wage by 4s. for males and 3s. for females on each occasion, and for September quarter increases of 4s. for males and 2s. 6d. for females were awarded. No change was made following the index number for the December quarter of 1956.



The New South Wales Industrial Commission suspended quarterly basic wage adjustments from August, 1953, but resumed them in November, 1955, with the addition of the full amount indicated by the rise in the index number during the period of suspension. In the most recent quarter, a decrease of 4s. for adult males in Sydney followed the application of the index number. In Victoria, where wages are determined by Wages Boards, automatic adjustments were continued under special legislation until June quarter, 1956, after which they were suspended. In South Australia, the State basic wage has been pegged to the Commonwealth basic wage, the only adjustment since August, 1953, being an addition of 10s. for adult males as from June, 1956. The Western Australian Court of Arbitration made no adjustment to the basic wage after July, 1953, until August, 1955, when an increase was made on account of price rises in the June quarter. Five subsequent increases have been made, the latest of which operated from 25th January, 1957, the rise for adult males in Perth being 1s. 1d. In Tasmania, quarterly adjustments were suspended from August, 1953, to February, 1956, when the total increase, amounting to 17s. in Hobart, due to rises in the index number during the period of suspension, was added. Adjustments were made in the next two quarters, but the State Wages Boards decided to suspend automatic adjustments for a trial period thereafter.

Retail Prices and Basic Wage Rates.

Australian Capital Cities.

Capital City.	Retail Price Index.				Common-wealth Basic Wage.	State Basic Wage.					
	Sept. Quarter, 1956.		Dec. Quarter, 1956.		Males. <sup>a</sup>	Males.	Females.	Date of Operation. <sup>b</sup>			
	A	B	A	B							
					£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.				
Brisbane	2370	2287	2335	2305	11 8 0	12 1 0	8 2 6	29. 10. 56			
Sydney ..	2665	2559	2624	2578	12 13 0	13 10 0	10 2 6	Feb., 1957			
Melbourne	2628	2506	2603	2519	12 5 0	13 3 0	9 17 0	Aug., 1956c			
Adelaide	2526	2426	2497	2424	12 1 0	12 1 0	9 1 0	June, 1956			
Perth ..	2680	2671	2690	2681	12 6 0	13 6 3	8 13 1	25. 1. 57			
Hobart ..	2703	2645	2712	2659	12 12 0	13 12 0	10 4 0	Aug., 1956c			

Note: A includes, and B excludes, price movements due to potatoes and onions.

a Operative from beginning of first pay-period in June, 1956. The female rates are 75 per cent. of the male rates.

b Where dates are not quoted wage rates operate from beginning of first pay-period in month shown.

c No State wage is actually declared. The rate fixed by the Commonwealth Court was usually followed until August, 1953. For later adjustments, see above.

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BRISBANE.

13th February, 1957.

## The "C" Series Retail Price Index.

(Base for Each Section: Weighted Average of Six Capital Cities, 1923-1927 = 1,000.)

City.	Year Ended June, 1939.	Year Ended Sept., 1956.	Year Ended Dec., 1956.	Quarter Ended -				
				Dec., 1955.	March, 1956.	June, 1956.	Sept., 1956.	Dec., 1956.
1. Aggregate - All Groups.								
Brisbane .. ..	863	2288	2316	2223	2260	2299	2370	2335
Toowoomba .. ..	851	2326	2356	2262	2295	2343	2404	2382
Rockhampton .. ..	861	2320	2346	2263	2296	2327	2392	2370
Townsville .. ..	912	2410	2434	2351	2388	2424	2478	2444
Bundaberg .. ..	841	2268	2293	2216	2250	2280	2326	2317
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	864	2301	2328	2237	2274	2312	2380	2347
Warwick .. ..	822	2286	2312	2229	2256	2301	2357	2332
2. All Groups EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a).								
Brisbane .. ..	863	2252	2272	2225	2234	2263	2287	2305
Toowoomba .. ..	851	2288	2309	2261	2266	2303	2320	2348
Rockhampton .. ..	861	2283	2303	2259	2265	2288	2319	2341
Townsville .. ..	912	2375	2393	2349	2357	2389	2406	2421
Bundaberg .. ..	841	2232	2248	2217	2222	2240	2249	2279
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	864	2264	2284	2238	2246	2275	2298	2317
Warwick .. ..	822	2248	2264	2227	2229	2261	2274	2293
3. Food and Groceries.								
Brisbane .. ..	856	2674	2719	2530	2628	2684	2853	2711
Toowoomba .. ..	814	2741	2791	2600	2693	2764	2905	2801
Rockhampton .. ..	895	2694	2724	2588	2677	2698	2814	2708
Townsville .. ..	955	2819	2846	2704	2800	2825	2946	2812
Bundaberg .. ..	903	2716	2753	2600	2695	2724	2843	2748
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	864	2691	2734	2552	2650	2701	2859	2725
Warwick .. ..	846	2745	2784	2619	2693	2765	2901	2778
4. Food and Groceries EXCLUDING price movements of potatoes and onions (a).								
Brisbane .. ..	856	2574	2598	2533	2554	2585	2624	2628
Toowoomba .. ..	814	2634	2660	2598	2612	2651	2673	2705
Rockhampton .. ..	895	2589	2601	2575	2589	2587	2606	2620
Townsville .. ..	955	2719	2731	2696	2711	2725	2743	2745
Bundaberg .. ..	903	2613	2622	2601	2617	2610	2625	2637
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	864	2590	2612	2554	2573	2599	2634	2640
Warwick .. ..	846	2637	2652	2610	2619	2651	2667	2669
5. Clothing and Footwear.								
Brisbane .. ..	829	3138	3152	3136	3128	3134	3155	3192
Toowoomba .. ..	829	3143	3166	3121	3121	3152	3176	3214
Rockhampton .. ..	845	3137	3162	3127	3124	3129	3166	3228
Townsville .. ..	840	3169	3184	3164	3160	3167	3183	3226
Bundaberg .. ..	839	3162	3179	3156	3151	3170	3170	3223
Weighted Average								
Five Towns .. ..	831	3141	3157	3137	3130	3138	3160	3199
Warwick .. ..	825	3143	3156	3137	3132	3142	3159	3190

(a) Excluded as from September quarter, 1955.